WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 MAY 1980

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

'BOGEY' STEVENS TO PUT WCHS ON 'CANDID CAMERA' AT ANNUAL MEETING

"Here's Looking At Us" will be the theme of Wystan Steven's slide show for the Washtenaw County Historical Society annual meeting at 8 p.m. May 22 at the Salvation Army.

The Society will elect officers and directors. Then Stevens, Ann Arbor City Historian and WCHS director, will entertain with color slides of historical society activities and people taken by him with his omnipresent ever-trusty camera in the past two or three years.

WCHS NEEDS HELPERS AT JULY ART FAIR, FOR OTHER PROJECTS

WCHS often needs helpers for projects and activities—such as the summer art fair booth and parking concession July 23-26, preparing mailings, growing plants and selling them at a plant sale.

Someone handy with a hammer and someone who can make signs is usually needed for booth set-up. Lots of staffing help is needed—that is easy and fun.

If you can give some time or if you have another special interest or skill to offer the Society please call Ethelyn Morton, corresponding secretary, at 662-2634. Your offers will be appreciated.

LAST ISSUE UNTIL FALL; THANKS TO ALL HELPERS

This is the last *Impressions* until September and again thanks are due all who make this newsletter possible.

They include Great Lakes Federal Savings which furnishes paper and printing by Don Hudson and his staff, Drury, Lacy, Inc., who help with production, Anna Thorsch, keylining, and Ethelyn Morton, WCHS secretary, mailing. Thanks also to Mary Lammers, Justyna Curtis and Debbie Signorelli at Lacy's.

WCHS WILL DO A LITTLE TIME IN JACKSON JUNE 14 SEEING SIGHTS, THEN SHUN-PIKE TO GRASS LAKE

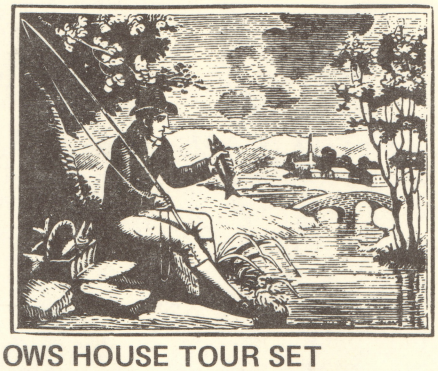
WCHS will do a little time in Jackson Saturday afternoon, June 14, visiting Ella Sharp Museum and other sites including the birthplace of the Republican party and even a quick drive-by of the world's largest prison.

The WCHS 1980 bus tour will then shun-pike back to Grass Lake where women of the Methodist Church will serve a roast beef dinner.

Wystan Stevens is working out an itinerary through Jackson and will give commentary on buildings and sites of interest. He has found an old drug store there complete with soda fountain and a Michigan Theater designed by the same architect as Ann Arbor's.

Ella Sharp Museum in southwest Jackson features the restored Greek Revival Merriam-Sharp home, dating from the mid-1800's, an original tower barn with farm implements, a woodworking shop, cross-roads store, log cabin and one-room school.

The home with stately colonnaded front porch has been restored with Victorian furnishings to about the 1880's. Many of the furnishings belonged to the Merriam and Sharp families. The formal dining table is set with dishes with "Merriam" imprinted on them.



Ella Sharp who died a widow in 1912 with no heirs left the house and more-than-500 acre farm to the city for a park and museum. The park was established soon after her death but the museum wasn't opened until 1965.

The bus will leave at 11:15 a.m. from the Great Lakes Federal Savings parking lot at Washington and Division Streets, Ann Arbor, where tour-goers may park.

The $13 per person tour package includes bus fare, dinner and museum admission. Advance prepaid reservations are due Friday, June 6. See inserted reservation form in this issue.

Because of the early departure, the committee suggests tour-goers may wish to take a brown bag lunch to eat on the way. The committee will serve a cold beverage on the bus. (Dinner will be about 5 p.m.)

For more information telephone Mrs. Ziegler, 663-8826, or Mrs. Austin or Mrs. Palmer at 663-5281.

OWS HOUSE TOUR SET

The Old West Side Association house tour will be 12-5 p.m. Sunday, September 14, featuring six homes. Commuter bus service between homes and nursery care planned. Potluck dinner following.

COBBLESTONE ANNUAL MEETING PLANNED

Nan Hodges, Cobblestone Farm Association historian, will give a lecture and slide show on progress of the restoration to date and future plans at the group's annual meeting at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 20, at Allen School, 2560 Towner Boulevard. Barbara Mecouch, Marguerite Oliver and Donald Parrish have been nominated to the board to replace retiring members.

The Cobblestone Fall Festival is September 28. The Ann Arbor Council for Traditional Music and Dance festival will be there September 21.

First U-M President Into Heavy Reading, No Frivolous Novels In His Library

The University of Michigan, now a great secular state institution of higher learning, was founded in Detroit in 1817 by a pious Presbyterian, a Catholic priest, and a pioneer judge.

The Presbyterian was the Reverand John Monteith, first president of the fledgling university. The Catholic was Father Gabriel Richard, vice-president and the other half of the faculty. The judge, Augustus Brevoort Woodward, christened the school Catholepistemiad of Michigania and named thirteen professorships with equally high sounding Greek names. The school amounted to little more than a grammar school.

Suzanne Steele, librarian in charge of printed materials at the Michigan Historical Collections in Bentley Library, focused on Monteith and his library in her talk at the April WCHS meeting at Bentley.

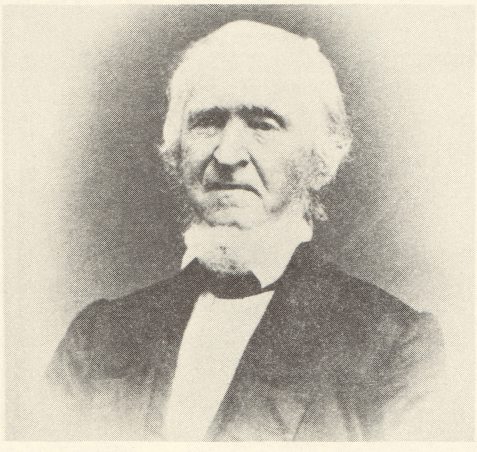
Monteith, born in 1788, died in 1868. He divided his life between the Presbyterian ministry and school teaching.

"He was six feet high and as straight as a Cedar of Lebanon," his son John wrote. "His features were cast in a Scottish mold and his power of endurance was transmitted from the sinewy race from which he sprang.

"His habits were strictly temperate and abstemious. He was never worried, always in good cheer but not jovial. He was shy of mirthfulness and in some respects inclined to asceticism. His goodness none could question.

"His courage was like that of Martin Luther. His conscience was quick and strong and was supported by his indomitable will. Duty was the mainspring of all his actions.

"He was just the man to attack the strongholds of human depravity where others dare not venture, to introduce the Gospels into undeveloped territories and to withstand the rigors of forest and stream and the long weary journeys in the



Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M

THE REV. JOHN MONTEITH, First U-M President.

prosecution of benevolent work."

"Of course this was exactly what he did in Michigan," Mrs. Steele said. "Detroit was something of a stronghold of depravity when he showed up in 1816 and he is remembered for three reasons—he was the first Protestant minister in Detroit, in 1817 he was the founder and first librarian of the city library and also a founder of the U-M, its first president and he held seven professorships.

"Monteith and Richard were very cordial friends despite their theological and sectarian differences. You might not expect this but their aim was identical. They collaborated more than they disagreed.

"Monteith's library contains two books presented by Richard. One is Thomas a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, the other, *Long Penitent*, is a sentimental little devotional book from Richard's press, one of the earliest Michigan imprints. It was given to Monteith's first wife, Sarah. She died after five months of marriage while visiting her family in Ohio.

"In 1821 Monteith left Detroit to teach Latin and Greek at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. On the way, he met and married Abigail Harris in Ohio. After some time at Hamilton, they taught school in New York State and Elyria, Ohio, before he was called to the Presbyterian ministry in Blissfield, Michigan, in 1845.

His second Michigan career lasted ten years after which the Monteiths retired to Elyria, Ohio, to live with a married daughter. They had nine children, the youngest born in Blissfield, but only four outlived them.

The library, on display at the back of the Bentley reading room, came from the family homestead in Elyria in the early 1940's along with other Monteith papers and diaries from other family members.

Among the papers there are eleven sheets cut from a notebook with the title, "Catalogue of the Books in the Library of J. Monteith, April 15, 1821".

"This is a unique and unusual document. We know what books he had in Detroit. We received 120 volumes, 74 of them are listed on his manuscript catalogue.

"It is a very rudimentary catalogue. He recorded a brief identifying phrase about the book but neither title nor author; the size, meaning whether folio, quarto or octavo, and number of volumes in the set.

"The catalogue has 274 entries all together, about 200 from the Detroit period. He had a sizable library for the time when you think he only brought 300 volumes back to Detroit for the Detroit library."

At first, he had trouble finding things to read in Detroit, where most of the population was French. He sent east for his books. He bought books on trips east and bought some from the estate of his cousin Alexander who died young in 1815. People in Detroit gave him some—General Alexander Macomb and Colonel H. J. Hunt who presented him with a copy of Shakespeare. After 1817 a bookstore opened in Detroit.

Mrs. Steele had prepared a special exhibit from the Monteith

library to show the variety of his books and interests.

"Most of the books reveal his interest in theology, which was to be expected in a practicing clergyman, and his interest in languages which is kind of unusual. There are a lot of language textbooks and a lot of books in French and Italian, also in the ancient languages—Greek, Hebrew and Latin.

"His religious books included Hugo Grotius's *De Veritate (The Truth of the Christian Religion)*, Calvin's *Institutes*, a six volume set of the works of John Newton, the English anti-slavery clergyman, of which five volumes survive, and works of prominent American clergymen like Jonathan Edwards, Timothy Dwight and Eliphalet Nott.

"He was very up on the major theological controversies and doctrines of his day. There was a lot going on in the Presbyterian church during his life about the doctrine of predestination and whether revivalism was right for Presbyterians.

"In addition to these extremely serious theological works there are religious works of a more popular kind—for example Hannah Moore's *Practical Piety*, given to him by his landlady when he was a student, and Fox's *Book of Martyrs.*

"He had eleven or more Bibles—in Greek, Hebrew, English, French and Spanish.

"When he got to Detroit he was extremely horrified to discover that the French Catholic citizenry did not have French Bibles—and in the exhibit is a French Bible that somebody finally scraped up for him in about 1818 after he evidently had been tut-tutting about this for a while.

"He sent back east for French Bibles from the American Bible Society for distribution to the French population and one of those survives in his library.

"His son's memoir mentions that family worship two times a day was never omitted. This is Presbyterianism of the old school at its finest.

"The library catalogue includes books by 18 ancient classical authors—standard for an educated man of his time when classical education was the norm. As far as English, there is Blair's *Rhetoric* and Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. What seemed to be important in the study of English was not literature but the use of language.

"Monteith owned a copy of Webster's Dictionary—the two volume quarto edition first published in 1828 which does not survive.

"He had the poetical works of William Cowper, inscribed 1813, one of the earliest inscriptions, and works of Italian and French authors—dialogues and stories mostly for young people."

He had some books on botany and three music books which do not survive. The exhibit included a sermon attempting to reconcile discoveries in astronomy with the teachings of religion.

"Subjects not covered in the catalogue are also extremely revealing. There are no novels or light reading, although Professor (Wallace J.) Bonk's study of the Detroit bookstore found novels were the most popular form of reading in Detroit.

"Temperance and abolition, two subjects of great interest to Monteith, also are not represented. In Blissfield, Monteith brought in a reformed inebriate to speak and persuaded people to vote against the sale of liquor in a local option election. Tavern owners campaigned against him.

Monteith was a staunch abolitionist long before it was fashionable. Once in Ohio he spoke out and was nearly tarred and feathered. Even his own family did not agree with him at first and suffered because of his unpopular opinions.

"His son wrote a novel, *The Raging Firelands*, of which a lot was obviously taken from real life, in which his father is the hero and at the same time a kind of comic caricature. You can see his own son's ambivalence toward his father's moral strictness. At the end, his father's beliefs are vindicated. I think a psychologist would have a very interesting time with it.

"The closest thing that survives in the library to abolition is Charles Stuart's book about Canada which praises Canada because slavery was not allowed."

While in Blissfield, Monteith tried to raise the issue of slavery in the Monroe Presbytery but it was tabled every time. "It really was not a very popular cause yet in the 1840's."

Monteith had a "missionary's interest" in the non-Christian world. He had a first American edition of the Koran, an Isaiah Thomas imprint, which does not survive. And this interest and sense of duty brought him to Blissfield.

At Blissfield, he labored half the time in Palmyra. The two parishes were 24 miles long and he had to preach at three different places on Sunday. A number of his sermons survive, including some from Detroit and Blissfield.

"Monteith would buy tracts from the American Tract Society and hand them out to parishioners. He literally went about from house to house and inquired about the state of people's souls—it was all right to do that then."

Monteith was in his late fifties when the home mission society called him to Blissfield, and he knew the job would not be without its problems, but he felt a duty to go.

"We sometimes overlook the dangers of sickness in the nineteenth century. The Monteiths lost two of their children while in Blissfield—the oldest, Charles, 20, died of typhoid and the youngest, Arthur, a baby, died of malaria.

Despite adverse conditions, backsliders and poverty, Monteith was successful. He essentially refounded the church and spearheaded a campaign to build the first building which was completed in 1849.

He was content despite adversity. He said, "It is delightful to labor in a new country—to see the tall forests yielding to your strokes and gradually converted to a fruitful field. And I think it is no less so in a moral and intellectual than in a physical sense."

Back in Elyria, Monteith continued to teach until almost totally disabled by deafness, and he lived long enough to be vindicated in his abolitionist beliefs.

"His library shows the kind of books that an educated but not a wealthy man had. He was a book lover who loved books for their

content—not a book collector. He compiled a working library to help in his own preaching and teaching. It is very unusual that his catalogue and library survive."

GSWC ACTIVITIES SET FOR MAY, JUNE, JULY

The Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County is to meet at 2:30 p.m., Sunday, May 18, at Clements Library to hear Dr. John C. Dann, director, talk about "The Resources of the Clements Library" and tour the building.

The annual meeting with election of officers also will be held at that time. No help session planned. The meeting is a week early because of the holiday weekend.

The Robert Andersons of 8173 Earhart Road will host a GSWC picnic at 1 p.m., Sunday, June 22. Their home is about six miles southwest of South Lyon. A show-and-tell program is planned.

The group plans to read a cemetery Sunday, July 27. Details will be announced later.

SALINE WILDLIFE—1888

"Ten thousand brook trout have been planted in the brooks about Saline" reported the *Ann Arbor Argus* for March 16, 1888, in the terse style of the day.

"Saline has got a live three-legged chicken" the rival *Ann Arbor Courier* noted on March 14, 1888.

"Argus" at U-M Graduate Library on Microfilm; "Courier" in Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Chelsea Historical Society—
Baked goods from old fashioned recipes and homemade ice cream are to be offered at the society's booth at Chelsea's sidewalk sale/craft fair August 1-2. They also plan an exhibit at the Chelsea Fair in late August.

Meet at 7:30 p.m. second Monday of month through June at McKune Memorial Library. Percy Danforth, "Mr. Bones", was to play and discuss the history of the unusual musical instrument in May.

Dexter Historical Society—
The museum, at 3443 Inverness, will feature a special display of 59 hand carved birds through June, then a doll house exhibit for the summer. Museum hours are 1-3 p.m. each Tuesday and the second and fourth Saturdays each month.

The Society's annual meeting will be at 1 p.m. Sunday, July 27, at the museum.

Manchester Historical Society—
The society plans a collectible sale at the Manchester art fair and sidewalk sales Saturday, August 9. Meets at 8 p.m. fourth Monday of month, alternately at Emanuel or Methodist Church through summer. No meeting in May as it falls on Memorial Day.

Milan Historical Society—
Meets 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday of month at Hack house through summer.

Salem Historical Society—
Planning a rummage sale and a sale of T-shirts later, also a June picnic, dates not set. Their next project at South Salem Stone School is to fence the yard. The society met and toured the Plymouth Museum May 10.

Saline Historical Society—
Sandra Hansen is to discuss "Landscaping for Older Homes" at 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 20, at the Saline High School library. The society plans a picnic in June.

Ypsilanti Historical Society—
Displaying its complete collection of about 30 quilts during May at museum, 220 North Huron. Museum hours 2-4 p.m. each Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

FRONTIER UNCULTURED? NOT ACCORDING TO THIS

If you think they weren't cultured on the frontier, hearken to this: among several notices of strayed cows and lost horses or purses in 1833 and 1834, the Michigan Emigrant reported someone lost the works of St. Augustine, 600-800 pages, in Latin between Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor or Dexter.

The loser wanted it back but was willing to let the finder have the pleasure of reading it.

Michigan Emigrant, Rare Book Room, U-M Graduate Library.

Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-8826
Keylining: Anna Thorsch
Printing and Production: Courtesy of Great Lakes Federal Saving & Drury, Lacy, Inc.

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

8:00 p.m. THURSDAY MAY 22, 1980

SALVATION ARMY

West Huron at Arbana
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 96
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Ypsilanti Historical Museum
220 North Huron Street
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

WCHS 1980 JACKSON TOUR
Saturday, June 14

Please make reservations for_____ persons at $13 each.

Total enclosed: $_____. Reservations due Friday, June 6.

Make check or money order out to: Washtenaw County Historical Society, 1931 Coronada Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

City, State, Zip_____

Please list name or names as you wish them to appear on name tags here or on back:

_____